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ABSTRACT

This book examines the education of Mexican Americans in the U.S. Southwest during the era of de jure segregation, 1900-50. The book focuses on the influence of the national political economy and the socioeconomic position of Mexican Americans as contributing factors to inequality in education. During the early 1900s, dynamic economic processes such as the development of railroads, mining, agriculture, and industry created the basis for incorporation of Mexican immigrants into the nation. Almost without exception they became part of the working class, and this status influenced the educational experience of the Mexican community. As increasing numbers of Mexican Americans became integrated into the economy, school boards established a de jure segregationist policy that was to last until mid-century. The education of Mexican Americans reflected two emphases: political socialization shaped by the dominant economic forces at play, and training for horizontal movement on the hierarchical socioeconomic scale. Thus, segregated public education of the Mexican American community tended to reproduce its class character from one generation to the next. Americanization, testing, tracking into vocational education, and slow-learner and mentally retarded classes provided the internal machinery that made segregation an effective tool. Chapters cover the following topics: (1) culture, language, and the Americanization of Mexican children; (2) the Americanization of the Mexican family; (3) intelligence testing and the Mexican child; (4) training for occupational efficiency: vocational education; (5) the education of migrant children; (6) inter-American and intercultural education; and (7) the rise and fall of de jure segregation in the Southwest. The book concludes with a discussion of continuity and change in the education of Chicano children. Includes an index and approximately 300 bibliographic citations. (LP)